

ROMANIA



Habitat for Humanity's Foundations

Romania became the 50th Habitat for Humanity country after being invited to help in the small western town of Beius. Five other communities, including Cluj-Napoca (Cluj), Pitesti, Radauti, Comanesti and Craiova have since taken up the challenge of ending poverty housing. In June 2003, Romania celebrated the 100th family that has experienced the joy of building and owning their own home.

In order to give families in greatest need the possibility to own a home, we adapt the housing style to fit the environment in which people live. HFH builds single-family houses as well multi-family housing. In cities where the cost of land is high, we build attic apartments and renovate existing apartment units. To address a special need population in Romania, we renovate studio apartments where orphans, orphan-made families and single-parent families can create a home of their own.

The size of the HFH housing varies between 21 sq.m. (studio-apartments) and 90 sq.m. (houses for families with many children). The average size is 65 sq.m. Homes are mainly constructed using a wooden frame structure and sandwich-type walls made of thermo-insulating materials. Use of durable, volunteer-friendly materials is a priority. The average monthly payment for a HFH home is equivalent to approximately USD \$40 and is part of an interest-free, 20-year mortgage.

Housing Need

Years of oppressive Ceausescu rule and a Soviet-style economy left Romania with an obsolete and inadequate industrial base. Progress toward a stable market economy has been slow and difficult. Real wages for working Romanian families have dropped by about 40%. In addition to the economic toll, Romania faces the challenge of thousands of children orphaned under the previous communist regime.

This economic and social legacy has left many in Romania without decent shelter. They are forced to live in cold, damp housing crowded in with others hoping for a better life. Many older wooden homes are on the verge of collapse, and broken windows are covered with cardboard to protect against the cold wind and snow. Makeshift stoves provide the only heating, and in some cases there is no access to drinking water.

Soviet-style apartment blocks present different, but no less tragic poverty housing challenges. Water leaks through the ceiling and walls cause the plaster to buckle and fall. The heating systems are regularly out of order, forcing families to create homemade and often dangerous heating alternatives. In some cases, entire floors share common, unsanitary toilet and shower facilities. According to the official statistics, 35% of total housing stock in Romania is in the state of complete neglect and needing urgent repairs.



Photo by HFH Romania

The Heredea family belong to the 6.5 million Romanians living in poverty.

HFH highlights

- Two new affiliates-Comanesti and Craiova-dedicated their first houses (6 altogether)
- The affiliates in Radauti and Cluj received land from local governments
- In partnership with Lions Club England, HFH Pitesti built homes for two visually impaired families
- Partnered with the local orphan charity Good Samaritan in order to teach young adult orphans construction skills to help them socially and professionally integrate into society.
- Developed official Habitat for Humanity youth group in Cluj, which has encouraged young people to volunteer in Cluj and other Romanian communities. Over 1,000 local youth attended Habitat event in June 2003.
- Recognized as the site of Habitat for Humanity's 150,000th home built worldwide (Cluj).

COUNTRY facts

Number of active affiliates: 6
Number of homes built: 145*
Year started: 1996

Population: 22 317 730 (2002 est.)
Capital: Bucharest
Area: 237 500 km²
Language(s): Romanian

*as of July 2005

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